

**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius**  
**February 4, 2018**  
**Spiritual Ponderings**  
**Fighting the Sin of Pornography**

During the month of February, it has been my custom to focus my Spiritual Ponderings on relationships. Over the last year, I have come to believe that pornography has become the number one threat to our culture because it trains us to devalue human life. It is also the number one sin that I hear men and women confess in the Confessional. It is my hope that this series of reflections will help you or a love one overcome this sin and to grow in appreciation of the Church's teaching on Sex.

I have discovered that IntegrityRestored.com to be an amazing resource for this series of reflections. I would like to reflect with you now on what Dr. Kleponis Ph.D., the founder of Integrity Restord.com, calls the 5 "A's" of Pornography.

**A #1 - Affordable**

One of the major problems with pornography is that there are many "free samples" out there. Trying a free sample of a drug or a pornographic image is not the same as trying a free sample at the supermarket. There is an inherent addictive quality to both drugs and pornography that leaves you desiring more. There is also some sort of chemical thing that goes on your body that requires you to have larger and larger doses of the drug or nastier images in order to reproduce the first high from the free sample. So while there are websites that do not charge there are other ways in which a person addicted to pornography pays for his or her addiction.

**A#2 - Available**

Pornography is so available. If you have a phone you are capable of looking at in appropriate images. One website that I used to use a lot for youth ministry encouraged users to report dead links or inappropriate links immediately to them so that they could disconnect them from their website. They explained that pornography websites are looking for former religious websites in order to turn them into pornography sites. Proof of this is simply that [www.whitehouse.com](http://www.whitehouse.com) is a pornography site and the official website for the White House is [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov). I think it is safe to say that nudity in television shows and movies continues to increase also.

**A#3 - Anonymous**

For the most part pornography can be done in secret. The very fact that you would not view in front of others should be a good indicator that you should not be viewing the images at all.

**A#4 – Accepted**

Pornography is accepted by many in society but this does not mean it is right. Pornography turns a person into an object. In government and Hollywood right now there are many men and women proclaiming that they were abused sexually by people in power. I would bet that many of these people had friends that supported their behavior at one time. They also probably have some sort of pornography addiction in their past that allowed them to stop thinking of people as people and start thinking of them as objects to be manipulated.

**A#5 - Aggressive**

Pornography packs a powerful punch to a person mind. It takes a lot of effort to avoid it and to fight the temptation to cave into it.

**Prayer for Those Battling with Pornography**

Heavenly Father, I have been living a fantasy. I hardly feel the prick of conscience anymore. I have become numb and dumbed down in my humanity. I repent of this addiction to pornography. It alienates me from those I love and it alienates me from You, my God. It's a lie, a trick of the devil. I receive the power of your blood that not only forgives me but cleanses me. Please do forgive me. Please cleanse me. Drive out my sin. And help me to walk in the light, to experience the blessing of my sexuality under the safeguard of your heavenly standard. Give me encouragement and accountability. Set me free from my chains. I receive Your Holy Spirit's power to control my base impulses and to become the human being you have made me to be, ruling over myself and this world with you. Amen

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Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius  
February 11, 2018  
Spiritual Ponderings  
Fighting the Sin of Pornography

When a person has a reoccurring sin like pornography, he or she must be willing to address it head on. It is not something we should take lightly. A website that I have found filled with helpful tips in this area is Integrity Restored. These next two weeks, I would like to reflect on their seven steps toward overcoming pornography. Quotes from their website will be in bold and my commentary will be in normal font.

### **1. Honesty, Self-knowledge and Commitment**

**Recovery begins with being honest with yourself, other people and God about your addiction. You take full responsibility for your addiction and your recovery, and you are committed to doing whatever it takes to recovery. It also means knowing your weaknesses. This means identifying the triggers and danger zones, which can lead to using porn, and developing the strategies to avoid falling.**

I have learned for me personally that I have to turn loneliness from a time of self-pity into a time of prayer and self-appreciation if I am to avoid sins. When I beat myself up and get depressed I am an easier target for the devil. When I see alone time as an opportunity to do something that I want to do like prayer or a hobby, I find that avoid sin much easier. When I am feeling really lonely, I write, wood work, wood burn, cook, pray, explore the internet for beautiful Church buildings and interesting saints.

### **2. Purifying Your Life**

**Healthy recovery obviously means ridding your life of all pornography and any access to it. This means destroying and throwing out any physical porn you may have – magazine, DVDs, catalogs, etc. It also means monitoring all use of technology with software, such as Covenant Eyes. Moreover, it means making the commitment not to use technology/pornography to selfishly gratify ourselves. Anything that evenly remotely reminds you of pornography must be discarded.**

Get rid of the junk. You do not need it.

### **3. Support and Accountability**

**Anyone who has been successful in recovery will admit that they could not do it alone. Healing and recovery always occur within community. Thus, you need to surround yourself with others who understand your struggles, will support you, and will keep you accountable to your program. Here is where support groups are crucial.**

A support group is important especially for guys who want to do it alone.

### **4. Counseling**

**In many ways, pornography use is just a symptom. Most people get into pornography as teenagers out of curiosity. However, what is it about the person who needs to keep going back to is over and over again? There is usually some deep emotional wounds that he is self-medicating with pornography. Often he has had the wounds for so long he doesn't even know they're there anymore. However, subconsciously he uses pornography to ease his pain. Through counseling these wounds can be identified and healed. This will lead to longer lasting sobriety. Unless the root causes of pornography use are identified and resolved, any sobriety will simply be "white-knuckling it." Counseling is also needed for spouses to heal from the deep betrayal wounds they've endured. Counseling is also needed for couples to heal the wounds to their marriages caused by pornography.**

Identify the root of a problem makes it easy to find the solutions that are long lasting.

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Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius  
February 18, 2018  
Spiritual Ponderings  
Fighting the Sin of Pornography

When a person has a reoccurring sin like pornography, he or she must be willing to address it head on. It is not something we should take lightly. A website that I have found filled with helpful tips in this area is Integrity Restored. Last week we looked at items 1-4 and now we will look at items 5-7. Quotes from their website will be in bold and my commentary will be in normal font.

### 5. Spiritual Plan

**Anyone who has been successful in recovery will also tell you he couldn't have done it without God's help. It's a known fact that faith-based recovery programs are far more effective than secular programs. With the Integrity Restored Program, we incorporate Catholic spirituality into the process. This includes daily prayer, sacraments, spiritual direction, scripture and spiritual reading, retreats, etc. Fact is that you need God's help! You need his love, strength and healing. It's important to know that you are loved by God unconditionally. There is nothing you could do that could ever take away his love. He still wants you recover and will be there to help you.**

The reason why I do bad things is because ultimately I do not trust in God. Taking time to read the Sacred Scriptures and the lives of the saints helps me to grow in trust of God. I have also found having frank conversations with God about things especially things I do not understand like the death of a love one can help me grow in trust of God and allow me to avoid sin better.

### 6. Education

**To recover from pornography addiction, you need to fill your heart and mind with the truth about pornography, addiction and recovery. The more you fill your heart and mind with the truth, the harder it will be to fall. Most of the people I've worked with have no idea what healthy sexuality and intimacy is about. Part of their education includes learning about these. It's just as important to share the truth as it is to learn it. Thus, many men go on to teach others about the dangers of pornography. This reinforces their recovery.**

When I think about how dangerous pornography is and the evil it can cause in the world, my mind turns to the story of Elizabeth Smart who was the young girl who was kidnapped and held hostage for nine months by a mad man. In an interview with NBC news she had this to say:

*"Looking at pornography wasn't enough for him. Having sex with his wife after looking at pornography wasn't enough for him," she said, simply referring to Mitchell as her "captor" during the 5-minute, 15-second video, and never mentioning him by name. "He just always wanted more."*

Elizabeth is also a supporter and advocate of an anti-pornography website titled Fight The New Drug

### 7. Virtue

**If you want to fight a vice, you do it with virtue. Initially recovery is about getting away from something – the drug. Eventually recovery becomes about what you are moving toward – a new and healthy life. It's easier to get to this point when someone works on growing in virtue daily. This will help him to become the man God created him to be – a strong leader, provider and protector! This becomes his mission and he becomes excited about recovery and live.**

Part of being a Christian is also about being the best version of myself that I can be. As an athlete must give up certain things in order to be in the best physical shape of his or her life in order to win, I need to give up sinful habits in order to be in the best spiritual shape.

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Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius  
February 25, 2018  
Spiritual Ponderings  
Fighting the Sin of Pornography

I thought I would end this month's reflection on Pornography with some quotes from Christopher West. He is one of the greatest teachers in our Church today on the Church's teaching on Sex. Quotes from his book ***Good News About Sex and Marriage: Answers to Your Honest Questions about Catholic Teaching*** will be in bold. My commentary will be in regular font.

As a freshman in college, I found myself deeply and painfully confused about my own identity as a man. I couldn't deny the fact that I'd brought much of this pain and confusion upon myself through my sexual attitudes and behaviors. The rampant promiscuity of college dorm life only served to magnify the meaninglessness of it all.

The stories of "sexual conquests" that we all shared (and no doubt exaggerated) as freshman guys made me think more and more about the ugliness of which men are capable. For every "conquest" there was a woman on the other end used and discarded. But no one seemed to care.

It all came to a head for me the night I witnessed a date rape in one of the dorms. (This was a Catholic College, by the way.) The experience haunted me: How could a man treat a woman as nothing but a "thing" for his sexual kicks? But the more I asked myself this question in reference to what I witnessed, the more I knew I had to direct that same question toward myself.

I've never raped anybody, I thought. But am I much different from that guy in the way I've treated women in my own thoughts and attitudes? Don't I also use my girlfriend for my sexual kicks? When I was finally honest with myself, I had to conclude that I wasn't much better than the rapist.

In this time of deep soul searching, I became angry with God. "You gave men these hormones!" I insisted. "They seem to be getting me any everybody else I know in a heck of a lot of trouble. What am I suppose to do with them. I want to know the truth! What's this sex thing all about? What does it mean to be a man?"

What I ultimately found were the writings of Pope John Paul II. Here is a man who has rethought and re-presented the teachings of the Catholic Church on sex and marriage with profound insight and great originality. His work sets the stage for a new "sexual revolution" that promises to deliver what its precursor couldn't: the true satisfaction of the desire that drives us all—to love and be loved.

He was able to explain the *whys* behind the *whats* of Catholic teaching in a way that showed the profound beauty of God's reason for creating us male and female in the first place. He radically altered the way I saw myself as a man, the way I looked upon women, the way I understood the Church and God. In short he changed my view of, well, everything.

Inevitably, as I draw from my own experience and what I've learned from John Paul II to explain the Church's teaching, people respond: "I went to Catholic schools my whole life and never heard this. Why not?" Others respond in tears: "If I had only known this earlier in my life, perhaps I would have been spared the pain of so many mistakes."

The Church's teaching on Sex is not something that is meant to bind us and stifle us. It is rather meant to free us to use God's gifts the way He intended them to be used. We all want to live in a world where no one gets hurt and the only way for this to happen is for each of us to treat a person as a person and not as object. It is therefore important to open ourselves up to way God wants us to live our lives. Because we are complicated people, we need to realize that the Church's teachings are something that may seem complicated also and we may have to dive deeper into them in order to understand why the Church teaches what she teaches.

Prayer for Purity: **Mary, Mother most pure, and Joseph, chaste guardian of the Virgin, to you I entrust the purity of my soul and body. I beg you to plead with God for me that I may never for the remainder of my life soil my soul by any sin of impurity. I earnestly wish to be pure in thought, word and deed in imitation of your own holy purity. Obtain for me a deep sense of**

**modesty, which will be reflected in my external conduct. Protect my eyes, the windows of my soul, from anything that might dim the luster of a heart that must mirror only Christ-like purity. And when the "Bread of Angels" becomes my food in Holy Communion, seal my heart forever against the suggestions of sinful pleasures. Finally, may I be among the number of those of whom Jesus spoke, "Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God." Amen.**

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